

*ELPHINSTONIA CHARLONIA* (LEP.: PIERIDAE) AND  
*POLYOMMATUS ICARUS* (LEP.: LYCAENIDAE)  
ON LANZAROTE

By DENIS F. OWEN\*

The greenish black-tip, *Elphinstonia charlonia charlonia* Donzel, is found in semi-desert and rocky areas in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia and also on the Canary Islands of Tenerife, Fuerteventura and Lanzarote where it is described as "very local" and the larval food-plant "not known" (Higgins and Riley 1983). A separate, isolated and well-differentiated subspecies, *E. charlonia penia* Freyer, occurs in south-east Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and northern Greece where the larval food-plant is given as *Mathiola tessala* (Cruciferae) (Higgins and Riley 1983)

There appear to be very few recent records of *E. charlonia* from the Canary Islands. In February 1988 I found the butterfly at well-scattered localities throughout the island of Lanzarote. All were freshly emerged and were actively flying in rocky, semi-desert areas where earlier exceptionally good winter rains had brought on a profusion of flowers. At one site, just south of the town of Tinajo, the males were flying round and round the top of a small rocky hill and a female was seen laying eggs on a mignonette, *Reseda crystallina* (Resedaceae). *R. crystallina* is confined to Gran Canaria, Fuerteventura and Lanzarote (Bramwell and Bramwell 1974). On Lanzarote it is widespread and common and in February 1988 it was in full flower. My observation constitutes a new food-plant record for *E. charlonia*.

Another Canary Island endemic, *Reseda scoparia*, is confined to La Gomera, Gran Canaria and Tenerife, and if *E. charlonia* is still found on Tenerife (I know of no recent records) this mignonette is the likely larval food-plant, although the situation is perhaps complicated by the presence on many of the Canary Islands of *Reseda lutea* and *Reseda luteola*, both introduced from Europe, and *Oligomeris subulata* from North Africa (Bramwell and Bramwell 1974).

The status of the common blue, *Polyommatus icarus* Rottemburg, on the Canary Islands has for long been uncertain. Higgins and Riley (1983) simply give "Canary Islands", Guichard (1967) gives Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, while Jones et al. (1987) list all islands, but provide no evidence, and I suspect they simply take the statement by Higgins and Riley (1983) to mean all islands. So far as I know, there are no recent records from the western Canaries and I doubt if the species has ever occurred on them.

In February 1988 I found *P. icarus* locally abundant on Lanzarote, especially where great carpets of *Lotus* spp. (Leguminosae) were in full flower. The best site was on top of the cliffs at Mirador del Rio where in an area of some 250 m<sup>2</sup> there were dozens of individuals, including

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mated pairs. Females were frequently seen laying on *Lotus* spp., once or twice positively identified as *Lotus lancerottensis*, a species confined to Lanzarote and Fuerteventura (Bramwell and Bramwell 1974), and also on what might be another *Lotus*, possibly an introduced species, but possibly an exceptionally vigorous growth of *L. lancerottensis*.

*P. icarus* thus seems well-established on Lanzarote. In May 1987 I failed to find it on Fuerteventura, but the island was dry and desiccated and no butterflies of any species were seen. Indeed it is likely that on the two desert islands of Fuerteventura and Lanzarote all butterflies are active chiefly in February and March, especially if there has been biologically effective rainfall.

#### References

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MOROCCO REVISITED — A CORRECTION.— In my article 'Morocco revisited in 1986' (*Entomologist's Rec. J. Var.* **100**:34) I recorded taking a specimen of *Pseudophilotes bavus fatma* Oberthur atop a small hill in the High Atlas mountains south of the Tizi-n-Test in Morocco. On re-examination I find this specimen is actually a small and unusually marked female *Lysandra punctifera* Oberthur. My thanks to Herr H.J. Falkenhahn of Kulmbach, West Germany for pointing out this mis-identification and causing me to re-examine the butterfly — a little more carefully! W.J. TENNENT, 1 Middlewood Close, Fylingthorpe, Whitby, North Yorkshire.

SILVER-WASHED FRITILLARY IN SURREY.— my son, Nicholas, reported to me that he had sighted a single example of *Argynnis paphia* L., the silver-washed fritillary, an insect he has often seen before, in Richmond Park, Surrey on 24th July 1988.

According to Plant, (1987) *The butterflies of the London area*, the butterfly has not been recorded from Richmond Park since 1953, although there may be later records of which I am unaware. D.S. BURROWS, Witham Cottage, School Lane, Boothby, Pagnell, Lincs.